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NEW MYTHOLOGY: THE REDEFINITION OF BRITISH HELLENISM IN SELECTED POETRY OF PERCY B. SHELLEY AND JOHN KEATS

NOVÁ MYTOLOGIE: NOVÉ POJETÍ BRITSKÉHO HELLENISMU VE VYBRANÉM DÍLE P.B. SHELLEYHO A J. KEATSE

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce si klade za cíl prozkoumat téma romantického hellenismu ve vybraných básních Johna Keatse a Percyho Bysshe Shelleyho. Klasické Řecko zaujímalo v období romantismu ojedinělé místo – na jednu stranu bylo obdivováno a kladeno za vzor, na druhou stranu byl i na univerzitách rozsah výuky původních řeckých textů omezen. Zatímco jedním z původních cílů romantického hnutí bylo osvobodit se od vlivu klasické literatury a najít svůj vlastní poetický směr, druhá generace romantických básníků se opět pokoušela pracovat s literárními pozůstatky starého Řecka, ale tentokrát (alespoň domněle) nezávisle na zavedených interpretacích.

Ve své práci se zabývám rolí (doložitelné nebo jen vnímané) autenticity, vlivem interpretací jiných autorů a problémem autority jako takové ve vztahu ke starořeckému světu ve vybraných dílech dvou anglických romantických básníků druhé generace, jejichž vzdělání bylo, pokud jde o klasický svět, diametrálně odlišné. Mým primárním cílem není zhodnotit příhodnost všech zmínek týkajících se starého Řecka, ale porovnat postoj obou autorů k jinému, nepřekonatelně cizímu a idealizovanému světu.

V první kapitole zkoumám vztah obou autorů k původním starořeckým textům. Snažím se ukázat, že Keats byl na překladech a jiných nepřímých zpracováních starořeckých textů závislý i v situacích, které to nevyžadovaly, kde by mohl prosadit svou vlastní interpretaci. V analýze se budu zabývat především Keatsovým sonetem „On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer." Vliv starořeckých textů na anglickou literaturu byl natolik silný, že autenticita je hodnocena na základě toho, nakolik koresponduje s již zavedenými interpretacemi v jiných dílech. Přesně na této úrovni se Shelley snaží pozměnit výklad starořeckého světa svými vlastními překlady (zde se zaměřím na *Symposium* a „Hymn to Mercury"), nicméně ani jemu se zcela nedaří uniknout vlivu anglických předchůdců.

Ve druhé kapitole se zabývám Keatsovým a Shelleyho zpracováním nové mytologie – jejich použitím mýtických postav a témat v prostředí, které je zcela zbaveno jakýchkoli jiných vlivů. Pro srovnání jsem vybrala Keatsovu „Ode to Psyche" a Shelleyho „Ode to the West Wind." Kapitola je zaměřená na způsob, jímž se oba autoři staví k symbolům ztraceného světa, co pro ně tyto symboly znamenají a za použití jakých poetických prostředků se snaží vytvořit spojení mezi nimi a mytickým světem.

V poslední kapitole se zabývám problémem ztraceného zlatého věku; jakým způsobem je jeho zánik interpretován ve vybraných básních Keatse a Shelleyho, jak v mytologické, tak v historické rovině, v Keatsově tvorbě jsem se zaměřila primárně na *Hyperion*, v Shelleyho díle pak na *Queen Mab*. Vzhledem k tomu, že oba autoři pracují s vizí stále postupujícího historického vývoje, staré Řecko může být vnímáno jako zcela odtržené od historických souvislostí a spolu se svou mytologií tvořit uzavřený svět, který je díky absenci přímé návaznosti kvalitativně odlišný od každodenního života.

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis sets to examine Romantic Hellenism in selected works of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley. During the Romantic era, Ancient Greece occupied a unique position, on the one hand it was admired and promoted as an ideal, on the other hand it was reduced to a very limited selection of texts even at university level. While the Romantic movement originally strived to liberate itself from the classical authorities and sought their own, new ways of poetic expression, the second generation of English Romantic poets made interesting attempts to appropriate the legacy of Ancient Greece, only this time (allegedly) independent of the established canonical views.

In my thesis I examine the question of (both actual and perceived) authenticity, the influence of other interpretations, and the problem of authority in the selected works of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley, two second-generation Romantic poets whose education pertaining to the classical world was substantially different. My goal is not to judge the appropriateness of the varying allusions to Ancient Greece in their work, but rather to examine the different relations of the authors to the different, insurmountably other and idolised world.

The first chapter is concerned with the authors' different approaches to the original texts. I argue that Keats's dependence on translations and other renditions was almost symptomatic, present even in cases where no rendition was required. My analysis is concerned mainly with Keats's sonnet "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer." Ancient Greek influence on English literature was so strong that the authenticity of contemporary renditions was judged depending on the degree to which the text agreed with the established interpretation. It was exactly on this level that Shelley attempted to change the perception of the Ancient Greek world through his own translations of the Greek originals (my focus is on Symposium and "Hymn to Mercury") – however, not even he was able to escape the influence of his English predecessors.

In the second chapter my interest is focused on Keats's and Shelley's conceptualisation of a new mythology – their use of mythical figures and themes free from any overt literary influence. For the comparison I selected Keats's "Ode to Psyche" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." The chapter discusses the manner in which the poets position themselves to the symbols of the lost world, how they perceive their meaning and by

the use of what techniques they are trying to establish a connection with the mythological realm.

The last chapter is interested in the problem of the lost Golden Age, how its loss is interpreted in the selected poems of Keats and Shelley, both from the mythological and from the historical perspective. My focus is on Keats's *Hyperion* and Shelley's *Queen Mab*. Considering the fact that both poets believe in the historical tendency towards progress, Ancient Greece could be perceived as utterly disconnected from the flow of history. Together with its mythology, Ancient Greece is perceived as a wholly isolated world, since any temporal or thematic continuity between it and the contemporary world is absent.

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INTRODUCTION

"We are always talking of Greeks and Romans: - *they* never said any thing of us."

William Hazlitt[1]

There is no real contestant to the depth and lastingness that the Greek heritage had on the Western world. When considering the relationship between Ancient Greece and the rest of Europe, the Greeks are always seen as instigators and inventors, never as inheritors and imitators. Without a clear predecessor the Greeks are not seen as indebted to anyone yet the Europeans consider themselves forever in their debt. Although for many centuries the Greek cultural and literary heritage was not held in such high regard as the Roman, by the beginning of the nineteenth century Ancient Greece in England replaced Rome as the cultural and political model:

> Men of the Renaissance, like Montaigne, would speak of 'the ancients', but in practice think of the Romans; they would quote fifth-rate Latin poets like Silius Italicus freely and first-rate Greek poets like Homer sparsely. This attitude was now reversed. What stimulated Keats was Homer, more than Vergil. (…) When Shelley and Goethe decided to write great plays, they thought nothing of Seneca, but strove to emulate Aeschylus and Euripides. When the revolutionary poets yearned for an ideal country, it was usually Greece rather than Rome.[2]

Knowledge of the Ancient Greek language and literature came to be regarded as a part of the higher education, yet the scope of the taught material was very limited. Students read only a handful of Greek texts, the focus was almost entirely on translating and there was very little contact with the Ancient Greek heritage outside the school.

[1] William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845) 205.
[2] Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 360.

The connection between the idolisation of the supposed Golden Age and the lack of actual knowledge and context could not be stressed enough. It was the Romantic era that gave rise to the first modern celebrities, people whose every aspect of life was under intense public scrutiny. We have countless books and articles describing John Keats, P.B. Shelley and Lord Byron's lives, short as they were, but what was known about the Greek poets whose influence remains constant across centuries? As Virginia Woolf famously summarised it: "Euripides was eaten by dogs; Aeschylus killed by a stone; Sappho leapt from a cliff. We know no more of them than that. We have their poetry, and that is all."[3] These Greek authors were the most prominent poetic authorities, yet unknown but for their work, a situation which many writers could find and did find enviable.

Yet, although their remoteness might also offer interpretative freedom to their literary successors, that was not the case in the Romantic era. For several centuries English authors wrote under the influence of the cultural heritage of Ancient Greece, their works becoming part of the English canon and further spreading their own interpretations. Because of the scarcity of actual original texts it was difficult even for a writer who had a good command of Ancient Greek language to form an impression of the lost world that could be truly authentic, and even more difficult was the attempt to challenge the firmly established interpretations. From this point of view, to talk about Romantic Hellenism might seem like an oxymoron, considering that the word "Romantic" was forged as an antithesis to the word "classical.". As Gilbert Highet observes: "It is painful to hear such a poet as Shelley described as 'romantic', when 'romantic' is taken to mean 'turning away from Greek and Latin literary tradition': for very few great English poets have loved Greco-Roman literature more deeply or understood it better."[4] What was once refused as a forcefully promoted standard, something that had little in common with feelings and ideas celebrated in Romantic poetry, was once again approached, but this time from a very different perspective. Not as an insurmountably remote part of the culture, but as a record of genuine feelings coming from a purer age.

In my thesis I will explore Romantic Hellenism in the selected poems of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley – which values they chose to recognise and which they ignored, in what ways was their reverence demonstrated and how they perceived Ancient Greece's place in history. My goal is not to describe and interpret all allusions to Ancient Greece in their works, a decision that is not governed solely by the scope of a bachelor thesis, as the purely

[3] Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (London: Hogarth Press, 1925) 35.
[4] Highet, 227.

formulaic use of the classical tropes is not conductive to close reading. The poems are selected from different periods of the poets' lives, reflecting their diverse attempts to appropriate the Ancient Greek heritage.

In the first chapter I will examine the ways in which the two poets' diametrically different education influenced Keats's and Shelley's opinions of how original Greek sources should be interpreted. In Keats, I will discuss "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" and consider how authentic can a perception of Ancient Greece be when seen through a translation, and the ways in which his own pre-formed conception of Ancient Greece could manifest itself when dealing with primary texts. In Shelley's work I will briefly discuss his own translations from the Greek – "Hymn to Mercury" and Plato's *Symposium* (translated as *The Banquet*) – and consider the way in which his pre-formed conception of Ancient Greece affected the faithfulness of his translations.

In the second chapter I will analyse the ways in which Keats and Shelley related themselves to the direct representation of the Ancient Greek world. What exactly made the Greek mythological figures in the poets' opinions approachable and – now in absence of a translator/mediator or the authority of original texts – how confident they were in relating themselves directly to the Ancient world. I chose the ode as a genre whose literary tradition should facilitate the direct appeal, selecting "Ode to Psyche" by Keats and "Ode to the West Wind" by Shelley.

The third and last chapter is concerned with the ways in which Keats and Shelley perceived the historical position of Ancient Greece. The inevitable fall of the Golden Age needed to be rationalised – either to be outright described as a regrettable loss, or subtly to be distanced from its decay and placed in an ahistorical, internalised place. I will show that Keats in *Hyperion* struggled to promote his own interpretation of Ancient Greece against other established literary voices, and that Shelley could not omit to glorify the Ancient Greek world in *Queen Mab*, even though it was detrimental to his main argument.

In my thesis I will examine the connection between acknowledged and unacknowledged literary influence and the authority with which the poets' attitudes toward Ancient Greece are presented. I will show under which circumstances the established views on Ancient Greece contribute to the distortion of the poets' aims. The poems for each chapter are selected in such a way that a meaningful comparison between Keats's and Shelley's stance could be drawn.

CHAPTER 1: THE QUEST FOR GENUINE ANCIENT GREECE

In the early nineteenth century the use of imagery from Greek or Roman mythology was felt to be creatively exhausted, reduced to a set of well-established but ultimately dead tropes. The pastoral was one of the few genres still surviving close to its original form, yet even this was ultimately deemed exhausted and trite, already at the end of the eighteenth century as Samuel Johnson wrote in 1781 about John Milton's *Lycidas*:

> In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply are long exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind.[5]

In the poetry of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley the themes taken from Greek mythology recur very often and so the question remains: could their interpretation of the Ancient Greek heritage offer something new or were they merely working with the same stale images but with greater poetic skills? Because of the insurmountable gap between Ancient Greece and nineteenth century Western world, the themes were fated to remain unchanging and distant, only to be approached with a reverence that was often felt to be shallow or insincere if not outright parodied. I will argue that it is not the manner of their usage of Greek themes but rather their respective positions towards the Greek cultural heritage that make their poetry dealing with classical themes interesting. The Romantic poets' different educational background determined their access to the original Greek texts, yet it is not merely a question of a degree of separation, as both Keats and Shelley approached the texts with already formed expectations. Keats, having no or negligible Greek, chose the translator who would define the Greek world for him, and Shelley, while claiming faithfulness to the original texts, adjusted his own translation from the Greek according to his own ideas as to what that world should represent. The two Romantic poets' interactions with translations show distinctly which part of the Ancient Greek world they are willing to accept, while their subsequent works show which aspects they came to perceive as central.

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[5] Samuel Johnson, Roger Lonsdale, and John Mullan, *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 95-96.

It is a well-known fact that John Keats did not understand Greek, he did not receive what would be in his times deemed a classical education and his attempt to learn the language on his own was but short-lived.[6] All his contact with Greek literature was therefore through translation and different collected renditions aimed at the general reading public, such as the books of Greek myths popular at the time.[7] Yet Greek mythology has a prominent place in his poetry, and the space devoted to it is conspicuous: while *Endymion* describes in more than 4000 lines a single tale from Greek mythology, Keats in his whole poetic work does not reference a single contemporary event.[8] What led him to adopt a legacy from which he was so distanced? Given his social and educational background, the distance might appear insurmountable and even the desire to cross it might be perceived as inappropriate, as it was certainly seen by the conservative critics of his time:

> From his prototype Hunt, John Keats has acquired a sort of vague idea, that the Greeks were a most tasteful people, and that no mythology can be so finely adapted for the purposes of poetry as theirs. It is amusing to see what a hand the two Cockneys make of this mythology; the one confesses that he never read the Greek Tragedians, and the other knows Homer only from Chapman, and both of them write about Apollo, Pan, Nymphs, Muses, and Mysteries, as might be expected from persons of their education.[9]

Because of his education, Keats's rendition of the myth is seen as shallow and pretentious. Gilbert Highet sees no need for similar snobbery and speaks very highly of Keats's talent, his vocabulary and his use of poetic figures, yet he still claims that "the gorgeous descriptions sometimes seem to be, not the imaginative efflorescence of clear original thinking, but decorations concealing the commonplace."[10] The rather automatic and unreflective use of the tropes from common cultural background is frequent in Keats's early poetry. As Helen Vendler puts it: "The young poet endangers his art by trying to convey his inner aspiration in terms familiar to his audience rather than in terms authentic to himself."[11] It is not the lack of

[6] John Keats, Grant F Scott, Hyder Edward Rollins, *Selected Letters of John Keats* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) 119, 379.

[7] Highet, 416.

[8] *Quarterly Review,* 132 (January 1872), 61.

[9] Geoffrey Matthews, *Keats: the Critical Heritage* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971) 100.

[10] Highet, 417.

[11] Helen Vendler "John Keats: Perfecting the Sonnet" *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: John Keats* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007) 233.

factual knowledge about the world that Keats tries to describe but rather his lack of genuine emotional investment that would go beyond his admiration of aesthetic qualities.

Keats's ignorance of Greek forced him to rely on translators and the question of a proper reception and relation to other influences remains a recurring theme throughout his poetry. His famous early poem "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" is an excellent example of the several ways in which was Keats's perception of Ancient Greece modified. While the poem is chiefly concerned with the immense influence Chapman's Renaissance translation had on Keats's perception of Homer and his realm – and Ancient Greece in general – it betrays several other influences. It is written in a perfect Petrarchan sonnet form – in this choice Keats seems to follow Leigh Hunt whose sonnets were all Petrarchan. The indirect Italian influence in Keats's appropriation of the Greek is not as overt as when Shelley chose ottava rima as a form for his translation of "Hymn to Mercury", yet it is still noticeable. Chapman's role is far greater than that of a mere guide, he had a central role among the literary influences which shaped Keats conception of Greek literature. The influence was not only thematic, as shown, for instance, by William T. Arnold, who points to many linguistic similarities between Keats and Chapman.[12]

Before reading Chapman's translation, Keats was already familiar with the translation of Homer by Alexander Pope, but it left no deeper impression.[13] It is Chapman who is credited with enabling Keats to see and comprehend the Ancient world:

> Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
> That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
> Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
> Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold: [14]

One of the most important questions here, of course, is whether Chapman does indeed manage to adequately translate Homer, whether what Keats was reading was a faithful translation. If Keats recognises him as his chief guide to the Ancient Greek world, any distortions found elsewhere in Keats's poetry could easily be attributed to Chapman. Many critics, while recognising the literary merits of Chapman's translation, comment on the many deviations in style, structure and word choice. According to Mathew Arnold in his *On*

[12] John Keats, ed. William T. Arnold, *The Poetical Works of John Keats* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & co, 1984), 47.
[13] Highet 416.
[14] Keats, *The Poetical Works*, 47.

Translating Homer: "between Chapman and Homer there is interposed the mist of the fancifulness of the Elizabethan age, entirely alien to the plain directness of Homer's thought and feeling"[15] Arnold goes even further when comparing him to other translators: "it is the fantasticality of his ideas which puts him farthest from resembling Homer."[16] Even George Saintsbury, although he considers Chapman's translation the best one produced so far and praises it at length, calls attention to Chapman's "outrageous liberties", "occasional unfaithfulness" and "the condescension to his own fancies and the fancies of his age."[17] Both critics stress "the fancifulness", which did not stop at choosing not quite corresponding terms or single words, as Chapman in places even adds lines and content not present in Homer. There is a critical consensus that whatever merits Chapman's translation has, it does not accurately convey the tone of Homer's epic.

The choice Keats made when he opted for Chapman's translation over Pope's clearly reflects his own pre-existing conceptions of what features the Ancient Greek world should exhibit. Pope's translation is as guilty as Chapman's of substantial departures from the Greek text,[18] but Chapman's style shares many features with the poetry of Edmund Spenser and John Milton, two poets who had quite possibly the most profound influence on Keats. The influence of the Greek Classics is so integrated into English literature that the themes are inescapable for any reader. To turn to the Greek authors after reading English authors writing after the Elizabethan era is an attempt to retrace the themes with which one is already familiar, to rediscover for oneself something which the literary world already claimed for itself. The themes of discovery and new realms readily offer themselves. Those are famously used in Keats's "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" where Keats likens himself first to the traveller, then to an astronomer and finally to an explorer. It is as a traveller that he establishes his goals and expectations:

> Round many western islands have I been
> Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
> Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
> That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;[19]

[15] Mathew Arnold, *On Translating Homer* (London: Smith, Elder & CO, 1896) 11.
[16] Arnold, 67.
[17] George Saintsbury, *A History of Elizabethan Literature* (London: Macmillan and CO, 1920) 189-190.
[18] Arnold, 19.
[19] Keats, *The Poetical Works*, 47.

He already anticipates the realm he expects to discover, an image which does not correspond so much with the astronomer discovering a new world which suddenly appears, but rather with an astronomer who through careful, studious observations can confirm an existence of a planet in a place where he already suspected it. The last role which Keats adopts, that of an explorer, appears to be a compromise between the last two. While the explorer knows what he should expect to find, no manner of anticipation can prepare him for the actual reality of an entirely new realm. In the last lines, Keats repeatedly changes the direction of the view:

> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.[20]

He imagines himself as Cortez[21] but immediately distances himself by using the third-person, then traces the gaze exchanged between the sailors and finally recedes and captures the surroundings. The constant changes seem indicative of Keats's uncertainty as to how exactly he should position himself in his attempt to capture the allegorical new realm.

The stress on physical as well as on a mental distance appears also in Keats's sonnet "To Homer", where without the guide in the form of Chapman, the distance between Keats and the Ancient Greek world cannot be bridged:

> Standing aloof in giant ignorance,
> Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
> As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
> To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.[22]

There is no mediator this time, no allegory of voyage or discoveries, and Homer and the Greco-Roman gods remain equally remote. Homer is perceived as privileged not just for his poetic talent but also because he shared and shaped the same, now inaccessible, realm: "Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel/ To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell."[23] The Greek gods and Homer are regarded as equals in terms of the imaginative power they possess

[20] Keats, *The Poetical Works,* 47.
[21] While the first conquistador that reached Pacific Ocean was Vasco Núñez de Balboa, it is unclear whether this was a genuine mistake on Keats's part or if he was intentionally using the more famous and recognizable name.
[22] Keats, *The Poetical Works,* 338.
[23] Keats, *The Poetical Works,* 338.

or could inspire and are equally lost to the poetic persona without the indispensable interpreter. Throughout Keats's work the theme of an appropriate absorption and the constant need for successful rendition recurs often. Without the guidance of an appropriate mediator Keats's handling of Ancient Greek themes often remains in the well-established mode of unreflective reverence, as any meaningful stance could be taken only through a mediator. The need for a translator is almost symptomatic – in his letter to J. H. Reynolds Keats wrote: "If you understood Greek, and would read me passages, now and then, explaining their meaning, 't would be, from its mistiness, perhaps a greater luxury than reading the thing one's self."[24] It is this "mistiness", however, that shall distance Keats from the Ancients, and so create a space for a new interpretation.

In comparison, Shelley's circumstances could not have been more different – he had no need to rely on translators; he himself was a translator of Ancient Greek texts into English, focusing on both prosaic and poetic works. The most known of his prosaic translations are probably Plato's dialogues *The Symposium* (translated as *The Banquet*) and *Ion*. As for the poetic translations, critics often focus on "A Hymn to Mercury" of his partially translated Homeric Hymns. Despite the different degree of dependency on the Greek texts, the element of poetic choice is present in both Romantic poets – while Keats is searching for the most appropriate translator that would best suit his already pre-formed taste, Shelley has the power to translate the lesser known yet still highly regarded classical texts. Shelley's aims and intentions as a translator are best outlined in his essays "A Defence of Poetry" and "Essay on the Literature, The Arts and the Manners of the Athenians." "A Defence of Poetry" clarifies his different approach when translating prose and poetry. He sees faithful translation of poetry as an unachievable goal: "It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language to another the creations of a poet."[25] Prosaic translations are much more open to literal, word-for-word translations, yet according to his famously wide conception of poetry Plato's writing should be perceived, Shelley claims, as such: "Plato was essentially a poet — the truth and splendour of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive."[26]

[24] Keats, *Letters*, 119.
[25] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry" *Selected Prose Works of Shelley* (London: Watts & CO, 1915) 82.
[26] Shelley, *Prose Works*, 82.

To examine Shelley's translation of *The Symposium* is to get an unexpectedly piercing insight into both his knowledge of the life of the Ancient Greeks and his degree of identification with various aspects of their culture. It shows a high level of critical thinking with its implied detachment and conscious selectiveness, something that Keats's poems never demonstrate. In "Essay on the Literature, the Arts and the Manners of the Athenians", a fragmentary preface to the translation, Shelley makes explicit his aim to deliver a faithful translation, so that the general public could get an unadulterated view of the Greeks, something that is uncommon in translation: "There is no book which shows the Greeks precisely as they were; they seem all written for children, with the caution that no practice or sentiment, highly inconsistent with our present manners, should be mentioned, lest those manners should receive outrage and violation."[27] Throughout his essay Shelley slowly prepares his readers for his willingness to not exclude the topic of homosexual love (unlike previous translators) from the one Plato's dialogue where this theme is the most prominent – or he was planning to do so, if the oblique essay itself was not deemed inappropriate and not included in the print. What Shelley offers in "The Manners of the Athenians" is his own perception of Ancient Greek society rather than an objective introduction into a different culture. Homosexual love is described as almost solely spiritual and as the result of the female subordination and lack of education in Plato's times and projects this view into his translation even in places where the original text offers very little to support it. Jennifer Wallace in her *Shelley and Greece* provides several examples where the chosen terms were without doubt detrimental to the understanding of the text: "*χαρίσασθαι*, the Greek term for the sexual gratification of a lover, becomes an emotional rather than a physical bond for Shelley, translated vaguely as "devotion"[28]: "if indeed the devotion of a lover to his beloved is to be considered a beautiful thing."[29] Given Shelley's excellent knowledge of Ancient Greek[30] the shift in the terms he chooses in his translation could not have happened accidentally, yet it is harmful to the arguments "The Symposium" presents, as it creates a gap in its reasoning: the devotion of a lover to his beloved would certainly be perceived as an unambiguously good thing. Where previous translations of Plato were restricted by the expectation and norms of the society, any divergence in Shelley's version could be attributed solely to him.

[27] Shelley, *Prose Works*, 125.
[28] Jennifer Wallace, *Shelley and Greece: Rethinking Romantic Hellenism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 106.
[29] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Banquet of Plato* (New York: Riverside Press) 38. The same term (but outside of an overt homosexual context) is translated as a "gratification of passion" by John Dryden in *Plutarch's Lives*.
[30] Timothy Webb *The Neglected Shelley* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015) 231.

While Shelley translated several Homeric Hymns, there is a little disagreement amongst critics whether the first and longest of them, "Hymn to Mercury" (sometimes translated as "Hymn to Hermes", as even in the translation itself the Greco/Roman names are used interchangeably), is the most accomplished. Shelley completed the translation in the summer of 1820 while residing in Rome, a fact which according to Timothy Webb profoundly influenced his conception of the Greek: "His experience of Italy also provided him for the first time with a sense of the south and encouraged him to approach the Hymns through the eyes which were primarily Italian rather than Greek or English."[31] Shelley chose to translate the hymn in ottava rima (unlike his previous translation of Homeric Hymns where he chose rhyming couplets), thus adopting a foreign form to translate a foreign text into English, an Italianate rendition similar to Keats's in "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer." This decision might reflect the need to stress the distance between the two worlds, to acknowledge the need for a translation through a translation. Shelley was already familiar with Chapman's version and the desire to differentiate his translation from one which, while poetically successful, is not successfully conveying the Greek spirit, is marked here: "Shelley is much nearer than, say, Chapman to the spirit of the Greek, but this appearance is also something of an illusion. (…) Shelley's version is augmented by many personal touches and emphases and by the addition of numerous placing and adjectival details." [32]

"A Hymn to Mercury" is an interesting testimony to Shelley's own conceptions, as its tone is considerably different from his other poetic works. Although ottava rima might be seen as a form that is restrictive and quite distinct from the original, it very well conveys the poem's playfulness and childish, non-judgmental delight in lies and mischief; Shelley's rhymes sometimes strengthen the connection between Mercury's lies and the true state of affairs, adding to the poem's dramatic irony. The poem presents the reader with a strange mixture of innocence and cruelty that is rather atypical for Shelley's work, yet it is at least partly his own addition as can be seen in comparison with Chapman's or contemporary literal translations. In the chosen excerpt the new-born god Hermes/Mercury playfully relates to a tortoise his intentions to kill it and make a lute out of it. Here is Chapman's version:

Tis best to be at home, harm lurks abroad.
And certainly thy virtue shall be known,
'Gainst great-ill-causing incantation

[31] Webb, 218.
[32] Webb, 232.

To serve as for a lance or amulet.
And where, in comfort of thy vital heat,
Thou now breath'st but a sound confus'd for song,
Expos'd by nature, after death, more strong
Thou shalt in sounds of art be, and command
Song infinite sweeter." Thus with either hand
He took it up, and instantly took flight
Back to his cave with that his home delight.[33]

Chapman is very liberal with the text as can be seen even in comparison with Shelley's translation:

'Better to be at home than out of door,
So come with me; and though it has been said
That you alive defend from magic power,
I know you will sing sweetly when you're dead.'
Thus having spoken, the quaint infant bore,
Lifting it from the grass on which it fed
And grasping it in his delighted hold,
His treasured prize into the cavern old.[34]

In length Shelley is closer to the Greek text (772 lines to 580 lines, compared with Chapman's 1011) as is the tone.[35] Underlined are the words which have no counterparts in the Greek and are purely Shelley's additions. They are concentrated between the end of Hermes' speech ('I know you will sing sweetly when you're dead' which has an impact that is much greater than in Chapman for its conciseness) and his killing of the animal. The additions serve to stress the discrepancy between the innocence of a child and the unapologetic and premeditated nature of the ensuing violence. It is a vocabulary belonging firmly to the Romantic Era, yet here it is atypically employed for the purpose of irony, going

[33]George Chapman, *Chapman's Homeric Hymns and Other Homerica* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 85.

[34] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley with His Life, vol. I*. (London: John Ascham, 1834) 375. The underscores are mine.

[35] See for example Hugh H. Evelyn-White's literal translation in *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982) 367.

even beyond the Greek poem's intent. In "A Hymn to Mercury" Shelley's own style and the tone of the Greek poem strangely mix, cruelty is enhanced not diminished by Shelley's embellished (but compared to Chapman still contained) language. Shelley is confident, and not unjustly, that he can still convey the original Greek tone of the poem even by utilising Italian form and Romantic vocabulary.

The different educational background of John Keats and P.B. Shelley to a substantial degree determined the positions from which they would approach and interact with the Greek heritage. Greek mythological themes were integrated into English literature to such a level that their use became commonplace and non-indicative of the writer's actual stance. Keats's and Shelley's attempts to assume their own stance towards the Ancient Greek world were on one hand hindered by the literary influences which presented them with a selective and distorted, yet highly authoritative, view of Ancient Greece, and on the other hand by their unwillingness to challenge the established views. However, whereas Keats in his early work regarded the world of Ancient Greece as a supreme fiction which can be only embellished but not modified, Shelley was more confident in his approach, using Romantic language to not only adorn the original texts, but to play with their meaning as well.

CHAPTER 2: APPROACHING THE DEITY

As the previous chapter explored John Keats's and Percy Bysshe Shelley's interactions with the Ancient Greek literary heritage, its translation, interpretation and misinterpretation, this chapter will focus on Keats's and Shelley's reconstruction of the Greek myths. Keats's Great Odes, particularly "Ode to Psyche", are interested in the appropriation of ancient mythology, the description and recreation of its ideal space, both external and internal, and the exact nature of the poet's connection with the explored realm. Similarly to "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer", "Ode to Psyche" presents to the reader a poetic persona attempting appropriation of the ancient world and the tropes associated with it, who is, however, severely lacking in its perceived claim and authority. Similar approach is seen in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" when the speaker's claim on connection with the ancient power is supported by the mixed use of different – classical and modern – conventions.

The ode, a famous genre of Antiquity, enjoyed renewed interest in the Romantic Era. The classical odes, as composed by Pindar, were meant for a direct audience, their unrhymed but highly rhythmical nature was favourable to a public recitation or a song. They were the "intense realizations of the moment of public triumph, with everything vividly alive, crowded and active, ablaze with energy."[36] Since Pindaric odes relied on the excitement they produced in their immediate audience, the relationship between the poet or performer and his audience was necessarily reciprocal, the excitement must have been reflected and heightened. Horatian odes, the second type of the classical genre, were characterised by their reflective, polemical tone, they were: "tranquil rather than intense, contemplative rather than brilliant."[37] Yet the odes were still written with the audience in mind, they still sought to influence, move or persuade. While English Romantic-era odes, as written by Wordsworth and Coleridge, were often seen as much closer to the Horatian style because of their preoccupancy with a quiet, inward reflection, they still carried certain characteristics of the Pindaric ode. English Romantic odes combine the quiet reflection with the almost jubilant excitement stemming from its revelations. While Keats's odes are much closer in tone to that of Horace, for example the first lines of "Ode to a Nightingale" are borrowed almost word for word from him:

[36] Highet, 253.
[37] Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1993) 856.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:[38]

Why this soft sloth, throught inmost sense diffusing
Oblivion as complete
As if with parched lip I had drained from Lethe
Whole beakers brimmed with sleep?[39]

The spiritual exhilaration characteristic of Pindar also occurs readily:

More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;[40]

All the Great Odes are rich in a classical imaginary, be it in the form of mythological figures, personification, objects or philosophical ideas. The relations – attempts to approach, take inspiration, appropriate – are influenced by the beauty, perfection and implied authority stemming from the association with Ancient Greece. Geoffrey H. Hartman defines this as: "a feverish quest to enter the life of a pictured scene, to be totally where the imagination is."[41] "Ode to Psyche" can be seen as Keats's attempt to appropriate the Ancient Greek heritage on his own terms.

The story of Psyche is a very late addition to Greek mythology, seldom referenced, yet it had a profound influence on the Western canon. The story is highly schematic, told almost in a fairy-tale register, using and popularising many literary conventions: Psyche is the youngest of three children (the rule of three), succeeding where her siblings failed (the test of personal worth) she is to be sacrificed by a common consensus (like the youths of Athens sent to Crete) she must go on a heroic journey and succeed in her quests (similarly to Odysseus' journey, what is tested is her perseverance and singularity of purpose), fails and is resurrected

[38] Keats, *The Poetic Works*, 232.
[39] Horace, *The Odes and Epodes of Horace*, trans. Edward Bulwer Lytton (New York: Harper, 1870) 498.
[40] Keats, *The Poetic Works*, 235.
[41] Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Fate of Reading And Other Essays* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975) 130.

by Eros (in a manner typical of soteriological myth) and ultimately becomes a goddess of equal status with her divine husband. In a way, the story of Psyche presents the ultimate wish-fulfilment, something that is very rare in Greek mythology, as each story usually presents only a part of the mythos – no over-reaching message is needed and so an unambiguously happy ending could be seen as necessarily limited, both in time and scope. Psyche features in only one myth; she was not to become a part of the Greek classical pantheon; her and Eros's daughter, Hedone, does not feature in any myths of her own, she is merely the embodiment of the of the myth's happy ending. Psyche herself became the personification of the soul itself, but only of a soul in one of its capacity, namely of the soul in love.

While Keats knew the myth from the Romanised, Neoplatonic retelling in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, a more recent rendition also had considerable influence: Mary Tighe's *Psyche, or the Legend of Love,* where the myth was retold at length, sometimes using a language that was very reminiscent of the tropes found in the genres of courtly romance, set against the background of a distinctly Celtic landscape.[42] Keats acknowledged Tighe's influence in "To Some Ladies":

> If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,
> Had brought me a gem from the fret-work of heaven;
> And smiles, with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending,
> The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given;[43]

But in the poem itself Tighe's influence – if we see it in the combination of the Ancient Greek myth with medieval romance tropes – is absent. In "Ode to Psyche" Keats is not interested in retelling the myth; the narrative is only implied. He is interested in expounding on the sentiments for which the Ancient Greek setting is deemed appropriate. For his intentions, a myth is more convenient than a simple allegory, owing to the history and impressions associated with it. The image of Psyche and Eros "couched side by side"[44] is clear in the feelings it aims at producing in a manner that the impressions and allusions Keats utilises in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" can never be. The narrative power is not here to support them and, most importantly, the poet does not feel confident enough in creating a lasting and influential interpretation.

[42] Earle Vonard Weller, "Keats and Mary Tighe" *PMLA* Vol. 42 No.4 (Dec., 1927) 963.
[43] Keats, *The Poetic Works*, 19.
[44] Keats, *The Poetic Works*, 237.

Keats chooses Psyche as a goddess most appropriate for his worship partly because of her not entirely canonical status:

> You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist who lived after the Augustan age, and consequently the Goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour – and perhaps never thought of in the old religion – I am more orthodox than to let a heathen Goddess be so neglected.[45]

Psyche is adoringly compared to more recognized gods:

> O latest born and loveliest vision far
> Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
> Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
> Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky; (24-27)

Phoebe and Vesper are situated in the night sky, partly to observe their classical associations, partly to draw attention to their distance and coldness which it denotes. While the poet's goal is to approach Psyche, invite himself to her worship and simultaneously invite her into thoughts that he tailored for her adoration, the older gods are seen as unapproachable, and yet more permanent and stable than Psyche herself. It is implied that the authority of more recognised gods might be oppressing for both the speaker and Psyche, when the speaker promises:

> A rosy sanctuary will I dress
> With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
> With buds, and bells and *stars without a name*
> (59-61, the italics are mine)

Unlike the members of the traditional Greek pantheon, as described by Keats in *The Fall of Hyperion*, Psyche is not associated with the images of decay, she is not to be situated in the ruins; rather it is the absence of proper places of worship and absence of appropriate customs that is highlighted here:

[45] Keats, *Letters*, 119

Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming. (30-35)

As Harold Bloom notes in *The Visionary Company*, the images used to describe the qualities of organised religion that Psyche lacked are almost mocking: "As the catalogue piles up, it is deliberately made to seem a little ludicrous, and the thrust (in context) is against the outer ceremonial of organized religion itself, not just against the Olympian worship."[46] Keats even, perhaps unintentionally, stresses the connection to the organised Christian religion by using the word "censer" instead of the more appropriate "thymiaterion". Helen Vendler shows in her analysis that while Keats was during writing greatly influenced by Milton's *Nativity Ode*, he made significant choices in the regard to which sections acknowledge and repeat: "All of Keats's Miltonic words in *Psyche* are drawn from Milton's banishing of the gentler and more civilized pagan divinities; none is drawn from Milton's subsequent stanzas on the defeat of the more "brutish" gods. It is not to Keats's purpose here to suggest the darker side of the pagan pantheon."[47] In "Ode to Psyche" Keats is not interested in celebrating any external objects, even those so firmly rooted in the classical tradition, his relating to Psyche should be placed firmly into an internal region – one that, unlike the external, he can easily shape and define for himself.

In the beginning of the poem, Psyche and Eros are seen standing outside the myth, suspended in a prolonged and unwavering happiness which gives the description an almost timeless quality:

They lay calm-breathing, on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu (15-17)

[46] Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1961) 391.
[47] Helen Vendler, *The Odes of John Keats* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003) 51.

The mention of breathing is the only thing that differentiates the scene from one captured in a painting. The scene's static quality is aversive to any change, enhancing Psyche's nature as an eternal goddess. Not only is Psyche granted apotheosis in the myth, her new nature means that the love she feels will stay constant and physical fulfilment will not diminish her desire. While the lovers in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" have to be frozen in time so that their love will never diminish ("She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,/ For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!"[48]) Psyche alone embodies the possibility of fulfilled yet not lessened love. Keats famously attempts to invite the goddess and the quality she represents into his own mind and "build a fane/ In some untrodden region of my mind." To stress the internalised and intimate nature of their meditative connection, the quietness of the poet's projected landscape is accentuated thorough the poem ("the whisp'ring roof", "Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers", "murmur in the wind", "wide quietness") in the absence of any other noise, the poet's voice can gain a singular authority. Psyche's ear is described as "soft-conched", a shell that echoes its surroundings, in what we perceive as a silence the inescapable sound of our own heartbeat and the murmur of blood will be echoed and heard – through her and only because of her, voices will be rediscovered. The speaker mirrors and counters the lack of worship described in the preceding stanza:

> So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
> Upon the midnight hours;
> Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
> From swinged censer teeming;
> Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
> Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming. (44-49)

He restores any perceived lack, yet as a "pale-mouth'd prophet" he remains dreaming – as he must, no other speaker can exist in Keats's projected landscape as it would diminish the power of his own voice.

Much critical attention has been given to the precise nature of the relation between the poetic persona and Psyche. For some this is an elaborate process of submission, Psyche "might be an object of desire who needs to be coaxed into presence through the poet's own voice."[49] Some even see significance in the fact that in the shape of Psyche, Keats's own

[48] Keats, *The Poetic Works*, 235.
[49] Martin Aske, *Keats and Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 104.

imagination is gendered as feminine and his claim to it might be perceived as a kind of rape.[50] As the late myth itself is about a possibility of equal standing between a mortal and a god, if Keats is to attempt to approach Psyche in a favourable setting, it is only by creating a new landscape in the region of his mind over whose shape he would have a total control. While in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" Keats stresses his inadequacy to approach the world of Ancient Greece on his own, here he attempts to recreate it in his mind by seeking additional authority through a creation of traditional images whose appeal to Psyche is stressed. The question of authority over the interpretation occurs once again, as the speaker strives to convince Psyche of his worthiness. If Keats in the last stanza describes the traditional landscape ("And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,/ The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep"(56-57)) it is not to celebrate its beauty on its own, it is merely the necessary step to seduce Psyche into his own mind. According to Harold Bloom, the implications are not of submission, "the process is one of soul-making in an undiscovered country; to build Psyche's temple is to widen consciousness."[51] This would correspond to Paul Ricœur's definition of appropriation: "the process by which the revelation of new modes of being (…) *gives* the subject new capacities for knowing himself."[52] Only through successful courting of Psyche could the speaker's mind inhabit the mental image he created.

Despite appearances, Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" shares many similarities with "Ode to Psyche". In both poems the poets attempt to make a connection to a figure from Ancient mythology while dealing with anxiety over their unsurpassable inequality. For Keats, the difficulty is solved in several steps, first by indirectly undermining the goddess' status, then by moving into a realm that is his own, and finally by attempting to blur distinctions between Psyche and the speaker. The relation moves from distant adoration to a search for shared qualities, as in the original myth the power should be on both sides. The speaker is not only a passive worshipper of Psyche, as is demonstrated by his poetic abilities, and Psyche is never to be fully appropriated – she is the personification of the ideal, one that cannot be hold indefinitely. Similar fluidity and slow change of *status quo* is reflected in the poem's form – despite being titled an ode, the poem starts as a Shakespearean sonnet but breaks the form towards the end of the first stanza. Instead of the concluding couplet the stanza continues and other irregularities (changes in the rhyme-scheme, occasional iambic trimeters instead of iambic pentameters, very irregular length of the stanzas) are gradually introduced. Unlike in

[50] Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1993) 176.
[51] *The Visionary Company*, 393.
[52] Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 154.

"On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer," in "Ode to Psyche" Keats does not merely passively adopt an English form to capture experiences pertaining to a foreign realm; every deliberate disruption of the established form adds his voice confidence, as well as betrays awareness of his own position negotiating between his own voice and two different traditions.

For Shelley, the authority with which he can claim and invoke a connection to the ancient divine figure (most often identified as Zephyrus) stems from his subtle employment of different conventions that could lend the speaker authority. While for Keats the focus stays in the mental space and it is only the enrichment of his poetical capacity that he seeks in the union, Shelley is confident enough to invoke an all affecting change in nature. In "Ode to the West Wind" Shelley mixes conventions found in an English ode (as it was established from the seventeenth century) with the traditional Ancient Greek plea to a deity and in a Christian prayer. It is because of the atypicality of an English ode that the three different modes of discourse could blend at all, as the traditional ode, Pindaric or Horatian, would not place anything relating to the individuality of the speaker in its centre.[53] But in an English ode, according to Paul H. Fry:

> An invocation beginning 'O Thou' is followed by a genealogical myth, which gradually changes into a narrative outlining the addressed power's contributions to history. This Progress leads to the assertion of the present need for the addressed power at once in the self and in England, and this assertion, in turn, naturally introduces a concluding petition and vow. (…) Just as the attitude of meditation informs a devotional lyric, so the attitude of prayer rationalises the structure of a vocative ode.[54]

Given the poem's atypical structure – many critics comment on the sonnet-like quality of the individual stanzas – "Ode to the West Wind" is a typical example of an English ode by the virtue of its theme rather than of its form.

The poem could be easily divided into two parts – the first three stanzas where the Wind's power is described and celebrated and the last two stanzas, where the plea to the Wind

[53] "No ancient poet would ever think of an "Ode to myself." Nothing like "My heart aches" or "If I were a dead leaf" can be found, either in Pindar or in Horace, though their carmina -- called "odes" only by later commentators --do not always treat the dignified topics one might expect." Francois Jost, "Anatomy of an Ode: Shelley and the Sonnet Tradition" Comparative Literature 34.3 (1982) 226.
[54] Paul H. Fry, *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) 98.

is made – mirroring the structure of a sonnet on a greater scale, even accompanied by a famous rhetorical turn in the final line: "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"[55] In describing the Wind's power, the stress on the personal, conscious quality of the "unseen force" is present from the first line by the unnecessary use of the word 'being': "O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being." Shelley's celebration of the Wind's power entwines the whole poem; it is through utter destruction that it is made manifest, and only through subsequent renewal can it be further heightened. While some critics analyse the title "Destroyer and preserver" as being indicative of the influence of Hinduism, such a digression seems unnecessary as the inseparable connection between death and rebirth was common enough in Greek mythology (associated for example with Persephone). People are stripped of agency, likened to the leaves moving under the Wind's absolute control, but the speaker himself is not directly affected by it. At first the possibility of the Wind's influence is described only hypothetically:

> If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
>
> If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
> A wave to pant beneath thy power (43-45)

Then it appears outright as a command from the speaker to the Wind: "O, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" (52) The speaker does not identify himself with the multitude described above, his authority is maintained even while he makes his supplication. To better understand the shift in the speaker's authority, we should add to Fry's description of the progression of an English Ode the description of a typical form of an Ancient Greek appeal to a deity:

> The longer and more formal prayers included (1) an invocation citing some titles of the god and perhaps mentioning the sphere of his activity; (2) an alleged ground for answering the prayer-former sacrifices to the god, former answers to prayer by the god, or an appeal to his pity; and (3) the petition proper. The reason why prayer should be answered was in almost every instance the bond which united the man and his god's.[56]

[55] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poems of Shelley* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1900) 319.
[56] Arthur Fairbanks, *A Handbook of Greek Religion (*New York: American Book Company, 1910) 84.

The common ground existing between the suppliant and the deity was expected and not inappropriate – to stress one's weakness to gain pity was not unheard of in a Greek prayer but was. By following the traditional progression of rhetoric, first describing the Wind's power and the boundaries of his realms – the Wind's command of the land, air and fire manifested in the degree of change he can bring – then appealing on the connection existing between himself and the deity, Shelley's speaker is making a plea observing the Ancient Greek conventions.

The connection between the speaker and the deity is not based on a past sacrifice or service, Shelley combines the Ancient Greek and the Christian approach when he first appeals to the similar nature shared between the speaker and the elemental force itself:

> If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
> A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
>
> The impulse of thy strength, only less free
> Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
> I were as in my boyhood, and could be
>
> The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven, (44-49)

And immediately afterwards when he tries to, rather incongruously, appeal on the Wind's pity:

> I would ne'er have striven
>
> As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
> Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! (51-54)

Because of its heightened pathos, Desmond King-Hale sees the climax of the speaker's supplication ("I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!") as the worst line of the poem[57] but it should not be considered in isolation. It is a necessary step in the speaker's supplication in his demonstration of his "sore need". It is because of the previous claim to a connection based on the similarities in their will and chaotic nature ("One too like thee: timeless, and swift, and

[57] Desmond King-Hele, *Shelley: His Thought and Work* (Teaneck:Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971) 218.

proud" (56)) that the humility demanded by the Christian tradition will seem so out of place regardless of its presentation. It is merely a necessary step which the speaker is willing to undergo to draw more authority from another tradition. The ultimate goal is the appropriation of the Wind's power for the speaker's goals: "My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!" (62) The implied interchangeability serves primarily to lessen the audacity of such a claim, exactly as in "Ode to Psyche" it symbolises the highest possible connection.

Keats in "Ode to Psyche" and Shelley in "Ode to the West Wind" attempt to approach the Ancient Greek heritage on their own terms, without any overt literary influence distorting their perceptions. While Keats in "Ode to Psyche" was inspired by Milton's *Nativity Ode* from which he took several formulaic expressions, the influence merely manifested in the almost mocking repetition of external displays of worship. In his appeal to the deity Keats manages to assert his own authority by moving the relation into an internal realm, silencing other voices and subverting even the expectations stemming from the poetic form. On the other hand, Shelley who is trying to establish his connection to the personified power purely in the external realm, draws authority from different traditions that guide the procedure of an appeal such as his and establishes his own authority by the changes in the tone of the poem.

CHAPTER 3: THE RUINS OF THE GOLDEN AGE

When John Keats in *Hyperion* and Percy Bysshe Shelley in *Queen Mab* outline the progress of history, they have no choice in one regard – they have to confront the celebrated world of Ancient Greece as faded and lost. The description of the classical world as the Golden Age inevitably opens the question in what relation this past is to be to the present. In its relation to history the Golden Age "sets up a realm of authenticity, the past, against the figure of a decayed, postlapsarian present, only to confirm the latter's inevitable fall from grace, its incapacity to recover its ideal."[58] This chapter sets to examine the ways in which the ruins of Ancient Greece in selected works are re-positioned and re-interpreted.

Keats's first *Hyperion* text is impossible to read while ignoring Milton's influence, which goes well beyond thematic inspiration and linguistic imitation. As Marjorie Levinson put it: "There is nothing derivative, nothing 'Miltonic' about 'Hyperion', and that is precisely its problem: it *is* Milton."[59] Under so profound an influence it is difficult to interpret any change or addition in Keats's rendition of the Greek myth as indicative of his own attitude. Keats attempts to reinterpret the setting of *Paradise Lost* in the light of Greek mythology; an ambiguous endeavour as even his perception of the Greek cultural heritage was heavily influenced by Milton. Even though Keats is in the retelling of the Titans' war against the Olympians much less restrained by canonical sources (the text of *Titanomachia*, which was seen as the most authoritative source in Antiquity, was not preserved), Milton's influence still led him to introduce themes that were restraining in their unsuitability to the original myth.

The Titans were portrayed as united in their defeat to emulate Milton's fallen angels, despite the fact that there was little similarity: "[the Titans are] not rigidly committed to an attitude of opposition: they differ from Milton's Satan and his followers in their absence of rebellious pride, and in not being forced to choose between hopeless resistance and unconditional surrender."[60] Through the diversity of their attitudes, the only thing that could unite them in Keats's rendition is their loss of power over their realms and, to a lesser degree,

[58] Highet, 143.
[59] Marjorie Levinson "'Hyperion' and 'The Fall of Hyperion'" *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: John Keats* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007) 99.
[60] Pierre Vitoux, "Keats's Epic Design in "Hyperion"" *Studies in Romanticism*, Vo. 14, No. 2 (1975), 170.

their loyalty to Saturn which manifests itself more as a sense of close kinship. Their loss is stressed, emphasised in every Saturn's feature: "His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead, / Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed;"[61] as is their unity which is conceptualised as a struggle of one generation against another. Where Milton's fallen angels feel the oppression of God's prescience, the Titans are to feel the implication and consequences of "Nature's law" ("We fall by course of Nature's law, not force/ Of thunder, or of Jove." (II, 181-182)) which was, ironically, the cause of their accession in the first place.

While in *Paradise Lost* the fallen angels are bound to their defeat by predestination, Keats is in the Hellenic world searching for a similar force that would make the Titans' defeat equally irrevocable. Keats's "Nature's law" is best outlined in Oceanus' speech, describing the war and succession of four generations of deities:

> As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
>
> Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
>
> And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
>
> In form and shape compact and beautiful,
>
> In will, in action free, companionship,
>
> And thousand other signs of purer life;
>
> So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
>
> A power more strong in beauty, born of us
>
> And fated to excel us, as we pass
>
> In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
>
> Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
>
> Of shapeless Chaos. (II, 206-217)

There can be little doubt that Oceanus' speech represents Keats's own opinions, as the same belief in progressivism appears several times in his letters: "All civilised countries become

[61] Keats, *The Poetical Works*, 252.

gradually more enlightened, and there should be a continual change for the better."[62] That is not to say that during the move forward there will be no relapses, only that the course of history generally tends towards progress: "Three great changes have been in progress: first for the better, next for the worse, and a third for the better once more."[63] What is added in Oceanus' speech – but it is the constant, most prominent theme of Keats's poetry – is beauty as the ultimate measure of worth by which the actual progress could/should be judged. "A power more strong in beauty" (II, 213) is an unusual formulation, serving to unambiguously strengthen the proposed connection between beauty and power.

This connection, however, translates poorly into the Greek mythical world, the idea of progress is foreign to Ancient Greeks' concept of both human and divine history. Hesiod famously narrates the history of humankind as a decline – from the Golden Age, to the Iron Age, with the exception of the Heroic Age, both physical and mental qualities of humankind diminish. The descriptions of the wars of gods on the other hand carry no evaluation beside the glorification of current rulers. According to Hesiod's *Theogeny* (which Keats knew in Cooke's translation) the Titanomachy was more a question of various allegiances than a simple predestined generational conflict decided by a manifest superiority on one side: Zeus was allied in his revolt with Cronus's full-blooded siblings, the Hekatonkheires, who were previously exiled by Uranus because of their monstrous appearance. Neither was the succession in power all-encompassing and inevitable – it is almost as if the following lines in Hesiod, describing the fate of Hecate, were written as a defense against the accusation that the Titanomachy was a total, all-affecting revolt: "The son of Cronos did her no wrong nor took anything away of all that was her portion among the former Titan gods: but she holds, as the division was at the first from the beginning, privilege both in earth, and in heaven, and in sea."[64] In Hesiod's telling of the myth the focus is on the individual and his or her choice, even the power of fate is limited – similarly to Cronus's defeat, Zeus was prophesized to be overthrown by his second offspring with Titanesse Metis:

> For they advised him so, to the end that no other should hold royal sway over the etemal gods in place of Zeus; for very wise children were destined to be born of her, first the maiden bright-eyed Tritogeneia [Athena], equal to her father in strength and in wise understanding; but afterwards she was to bear a son of overbearing spirit.

[62] Keats, *Letters*, 366.
[63] Keats, *Letters*, 366.
[64] *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (London: Harvard University Press, 1982) 111.

king of gods and men. But Zeus put her into his own belly first, that the goddess might devise for him both good and evil.[65]

In Hesiod's view even fate can be tricked, all conflicts can be traced back to individuals, while in Keats's *Hyperion* any personal conflict is noticeably absent.

Compared to Milton's fallen angels, Keats's Titans are one more step further away from direct confrontation with their opponents; not even the harsh reality of their fall and the beginning of their exile is described. From their very first appearance the Titans are given almost sculpturesque quality, devoid of all agency:

> And still these two were postured motionless,
>
> Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;
>
> The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
>
> And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
>
> (I, 85-89)

This is precisely what Keats admired in Milton's description of his characters, the observation taken and adopted from Hazlitt's lectures on Milton.[66] Yet unlike Milton's fallen angels, they are frozen in their passive state, as the poem is unable to depict the intended change. After the omission of the war between the Titans and Olympians, the only expected and foreshadowed confrontation is to be between Hyperion and Apollo, yet not even this action is directly described.

Following Milton's influence, the Titanomachy is likened to a revolt with all the implications it brings. Keats's sympathies are torn between two positions, namely between the support of the old gods, rulers of the glorified age, and the desired and inevitable progress which their defeat and the resulting succession of the Olympians should bring. The Titans' legitimacy is often emphasised by Keats, even at the cost of accuracy: Saturn is described as "first-born" to stress his claims, while in the traditional Greek mythology (where ultimogeniture was not unheard of) he is the youngest of the first generation of Gaia and Uranus' offspring. He is addressed as "poor old king", banished from the realm that testified

[65] *Hesiod*, 143-145.
[66] "The figures introduced here have all the elegance and precision of a Greek statue." William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845) 72.

to his greatness. The resemblance between him and king Lear (that Keats was reading at the time of writing *Hyperion*) is clear and invoked several times, from his physical description to his expressed feelings of incredulity and betrayal:

> Who had power
>
> To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
>
> How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
>
> While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
>
> (I, 112-115)

While Milton's fallen angels are active, ambiguous and unyielding even when facing predestination that condemns them, Keats's Titans are passive and listless when facing Nature's law which still allows room for renegotiation of power. In Richard Woodhouse's recollection, Keats intended the Titans to fight the Olympians once more for Saturn re-establishment,[67] however that was Keats's vision months before embarking on the epic-writing project; there is nothing to say that *Hyperion* would not differ from the poet's idea to the same degree as *Endymion* ended up differing from Keats's first outline. If Keats is unwilling to display the Titans' ambitions, it is because of the associations their defeat found in *Hyperion*. To name one of many examples, the resignation Thea shows ("I have no comfort for thee, no not one" (I, 53)) is accentuated by the description of her imposing stature:

> She was a Goddess of the infant world;
>
> By her in stature the tall Amazon
>
> Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have ta'en
>
> Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;

The Titans' despair is displayed as dignified, worthy of their divine nature: "How beautiful, if sorrow had not made Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self." (I, 36) Beauty is already the norm by which Nature's law measures progress, it glorifies not only the Olympians' succession but the Titans' defeat as well – the Titans are sentenced to passivity both by Nature's law and by the aesthetics of their defeat.

[67] William M. Rossetti, *Life of John Keats* (London: Walter Scott, 1887) 189.

Milton's crushing influence was certainly the main factor behind Keats's abandonment of the epic, as is evident from the often quoted line, seen as the epitaph to the poem: "I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me."[68] Douglas Bush attributes the failure of *Hyperion* to the combination of Miltonic technique and Wordsworthean inwardness,[69] the attempt at a confident and overreaching epic is riddled with unquenchable lyrical aspirations. The marked change of style in the third book of *Hyperion*, is often interpreted as Keats's attempt to reclaim his epic from the Miltonic style and its strenuous demands: "the restoration of Apollo as the golden theme is less a regression than a release, a moment of tact and insight in which the modern poet saves his integrity by acknowledging the impossibility of ever sustaining authentic epic monumentality for his belated poem."[70] The third book should constitute a transition from the embellishment of the defeat to the glorification of Apollo's succession. However, the description of Apollo's accession is still tarnished with the imagery from the two previous books:

> For me, dark, dark,
>
> And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes:
>
> I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
>
> Until a melancholy numbs my limbs;
>
> And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
>
> Like one who once had wings.—O why should I
>
> Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air
>
> Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
>
> Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet? (III, 86-94)

Apollo has to die into his new life, he must inherit the melancholy that became inseparably associated with the previous rulers. Once the aesthetic of defeat is established and rooted in the Titans' description, not even a change of scene and the introduction of Apollo, a god who carries the best qualities throughout Keats's poetry, is enough to facilitate the desired

[68] Keats, *Letters*, 379.
[69] Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry*, (Harvard University Press, 1937) 119.
[70] Aske, 96.

progress. According to Paul Sherwin, "What makes Keats's repetition of the Miltonic pattern disastrous is that it all but eliminates the human middle ground of Paradise Lost, the only realm in which genuine progress can occur."[71] The transition is impossible in the absence of a mediator who can incorporate both qualities, the heightened melancholy and the ascension in its uncompromising perfection, without being absolutely defined, and stymied by them. An attempt to introduce such a mediator is made in Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion*, but it ultimately fails as the constant transition between the cast of deities and Keats's *propria persona* seems to erode the power of both worlds – the presence of the narrator is a living reminder of the loss of the Golden Age, through his vision any past glories must be faded, through him the epic can never be appropriately captured.

Throughout his works, Shelley presents his own version of "Nature's law", one that is best traceable in the early *Queen Mab*, a work that was encumbered by various direct influences to perhaps an even greater degree than Keats's *Hyperion*. H.N. Brailsford called *Queen Mab* "Godwin in verse", although it has an "un-Godwinian emphasis on nature" that comes from Holbach.[72] Its style is heavily influenced by Spenser, the plot structure is taken directly from M. Volney's *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires*, and while the character of Queen Mab is taken from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the name Ianthe is borrowed from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Christopher R. Miller traces the poem's influences to Christian allegories of the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Piers Plowman*, and further to the epic of *Paradise Lost.*[73] *Queen Mab* is almost unanimously judged by critics to be a juvenile work, both in terms of the poetic technique and to the rather chaotic handling of its themes. But ideas central to *Queen Mab* – the progress of civilisation, qualities ascribed to Shelley's take on utopia, the role of poetry in its wider sense - reappear throughout Shelley's poetry and are not fundamentally changed. As *The Fall of Hyperion* is Keats's attempt to free *Hyperion* from the burden of Milton's influence, so is *The Daemon of the World* a reworking of *Queen Mab* that abandons the most egregious imitation – the structure of *Les Ruines*.

The ideological foundation of *Queen Mab* is very well known, but what is most interesting to us here is Greece's place in it. As Shelley adopts Volney's framework and traces history throughout exactly the same places – the ruins of Palmyra, Palestine, Egypt and Arabia – the Hellenic world is added:

[71] Paul Sherwin, "Dying into Life: Keats's Struggle with Milton in *Hyperion*" *Modern Language Association* Vol. 93, No. 3 (1978) 387.
[72] Michael Henry Scrivener, *Radical Shelley* (Princeton: Princeton Univerity Press, 2014), 68.
[73] Christopher R. Miller, "Happily Ever After? The Necessity of Fairytale in *Queen Mab*" *Unfamiliar Shelley* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009) 71.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now.
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes
Now crumbling to oblivion, -
The long and lonely colonnades
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks, -
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.[74]

The ancient Greek world stands outside of the idea of progress, which is in Shelley's conception a necessity that will be eventually brought about by the intrinsic, if repressed, good qualities of humanity. Even though Keats's concept of Nature's law allows for recursion, as has been noted, this possibility is not tested in *Hyperion*. Shelley in *Queen Mab*, on the other hand, presents a wide survey of the history and while the narration is not strictly chronological, the upheavals of progress and regression throughout history are still described. In this description Ancient Greece has a unique place. It is the lost Golden Age and despite its flaws it shows exquisite qualities that were lost and have still not been regained despite the progressive tendency of history. Shelley attributes the qualities of Ancient Greece rather inconsistently to its position in history, recognising the freedom in artistic endeavours that only a lack of predecessors can grant: "In the Infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry."[75] While reminiscent of the Wordsworthean concept of childhood that is susceptible to the pure, divine impressions, in Shelley's version greatness is not connected to the natural state. In his "Ode to Liberty", the Greek world is described as awaking to its greatness – the change from its previous natural, savage state:

On the unapprehensive wild
The vine, the corn, the olive mild,
Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled;
And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,

[74] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab* (New York: William Baldwin, 1821) 18.
[75] Shelley, *Selected Prose Works*, 79.

Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,
Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,
Art's deathless dreams lay veiled by many a vein
Of Parian stone; and, yet a speechless child,
Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain
Her lidless eyes for thee; when o'er the Aegean main.[76]

Although Shelley presents his vision of utopia as an eventual historical necessity, it is concurrently distanced from the flow of history:

Hurling their armed hands where the pure Spirit,
Serene and inaccessibly secure,
Stood on an isolated pinnacle,
The flood of ages combating below
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Necessity's unchanging harmony.[77]

It is the culmination of tendencies already present, but it is unapproachable in its perfection. The Ancient world, despite Shelley's knowledge of its shortcomings, stands in contrast to the reflection of a utopia that is directly traceable in its impact. It is telling that despite believing in the cultivating effect of poetic sensibilities, Shelley still considers the guidance of the remnants of Ancient Greece as necessary:

> But it exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if (…)a revival of the study of Greek literature had never taken place; if no monuments of ancient sculpture had been handed down to us ; and if the poetry of the religion of the ancient world had been extinguished together with its belief.[78]

But while the debt to the present culture is stressed, unlike in *Hyperion* the ruins are never embellished, they are merely the symbol of a loss, a poor reflection of former beauty: "The long and lonely colonnades/ Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks."[79]

[76] Shelley, *Poems of Shelley* , 57.
[77] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Daemon of the World* (London: H. Buxton Forman, 1876) 18.
[78] Shelley, *Selected Prose Works,* 108.
[79] Shelley, *Queen Mab*, 18.

In Shelley's idea of progress the importance of gradual change is stressed; the emphasis is on reformation rather than revolution. As in the famous "Ozymandias", *Queen Mab* depicts the once great civilisation in ruins, its dubious achievements lost. Only Ancient Greece is spared such treatment:

> But, oh! how much more changed,
> How gloomier is the contrast
> Of human nature there!
> Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
> A coward and a fool, spreads death around -
> Then, shuddering, meets his own.[80]

In Shelley's view of history the periods of flourishment and decay mingle, amounting to slow progress in their sum. Keats's idea of progress as elaborated in *Hyperion* is, however, based on a different principle which effectively isolates the Golden Age from any direct influence as its chronological progress is halted and severed. When Keats in *Hyperion* described his Nature's law as manifesting through a series of revolutions and wars of the generations of gods, he certainly did not mean to promote the idea of revolution as a means necessary to progress. His Nature's law merely took on the role of Milton's predestination, binding the Titans to their defeat. But as his envisioned change is facilitated by revolutionary means, the progress defined as an increase in beauty is difficult to maintain. The surpassed and vanquished generation of Titans still capture Keats's sympathies as they are still the symbols of the glorified age, magnificent even in their defeat, and also the means of Keats's lyricised introspective challenging of the epic distance that marks his original take on the genre.

[80] Shelley, *Queen Mab*, 18-19.

CONCLUSION

John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley in their works attempted their own, if possible uninfluenced, appropriation of the Ancient Greek themes and heritage. However, the Ancient Greek influence since the Elizabethan era became so integrated in the English poetry that new unmitigated interpretations deviating from the established perceptions of what Ancient Greece should symbolise would not be criticised as unauthentic and so the possibilities of new mythological interpretations were severely restricted. Even though Keats and Shelley came from a very different educational background – Keats relied on translators, Shelley completed his own translations of Ancient Greek texts – their pre-formed conceptions of the Ancient world influenced their interactions with the original texts in a very similar way. Because of the constant adaptations, interpretations and reinterpretations, Keats's and Shelley's quest for authenticity is moot. As Jorge Luis Borges observed in his essay on our continuous dissatisfaction with the translations of Homer: "With famous books, the first time is actually the second, for we begin them already knowing them."[81] For Keats and Shelley no reading of the Ancient Greek texts, translated or not, was truly the first and just so no impression of Ancient Greece was unadulterated and genuine.

The personal stance towards the Greek world, without any attempts for over-reaching interpretations, is seen in Keats's "Ode to Psyche" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." In their approach to the personification of the power from the Ancient world both poets self-consciously use the formulaic expressions pertaining to the mythology of Ancient Greece, only to reinforce their own authority by ultimately breaking them. In establishing and defining the personal connection the theme of change and fluidity recurs, in "Ode to Psyche" the poem's form subverts the reader's expectations; in "Ode to the West Wind" the poem's tone is similarly unpredictable. Rather than attempting to outright reinterpret the Greek mythology on their own terms, Keats and Shelley acknowledge the common approaches and use them for their own poetic aims. Just as when working with original texts the influence of other established interpretations is inevitable, but by acknowledging them and then subverting the expectations associated with them the poets' voices can gain a new authority.

[81] Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions*, trans. E. Allen, S. J. Levine, E. Weinberger (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999) 69.

In their interpretation of Ancient Greece's position in history, Keats and Shelley are forced to connect the idolised Golden Age with the images of ruins and decay. In accordance with their belief in the progressive tendency of history, they are by necessity placed above Ancient Greece in all regards. Keats and Shelley deal differently with the authority forced upon them. In *Hyperion* Keats describes the battle of two divine generations, but because of his celebration of every aspect of the Ancient world, not even the defeated side could be described in a negative light. The glorification of defeat hinders the desired celebration of the elevation of beauty, ultimately dooming Keats's attempt at epic. On the other hand, to Shelley the authority bestowed on him by his historical position causes no difficulty. The implications of the lost Golden Age in relation to the progressive tendency of history are already discussed in his essays, Ancient Greece is not seen as unapproachable, it is still open to criticism and its fall can be openly acknowledged.

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